

Texas Disability Integration Newsletter

Volume 4, Issue 1

June 2018

Inside This Issue

1 Upcoming Events

1 - 3 Articles

Upcoming Events

Texas Association on Intellectual and Development Disabilities has their conference on July 24-27th

<https://www.aaidtx.org/2018-convention-landing>

Abilities Expo, Houston NRG Center – August 3 – 5, 2018

<https://www.abilities.com/houston/>

26th Annual. Texas Autism Conference. August 2-3, 2018, San Marcos Convention Center. San Marcos, TX

<https://txautism.esc2.net/>

About this Newsletter

This newsletter is published by the *Texas Disability Task Force (DTF) on Emergency Management*, an advisory group sponsored by the Texas Division of Emergency Management (TDEM). The newsletter will be published on a quarterly basis and will include information, accomplishments, and initiatives related to emergency management preparedness and response activities at the local, regional, state, and organizational levels that are inclusive of people with disabilities.

If you would like to submit an article, please send an e-mail to gisela.ryan-bunger@dps.texas.gov.

Texas Disability Task Force on Emergency Management

Laura M. Stough

Texas Disability Task Force on Emergency Management Chair

The impact of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita on Texas clarified the need for a multi-organizational collaborative process to address the strained response capabilities for mass care and sheltering for people with disabilities.

As a result, the Texas Governor's Committee on People with Disabilities (GCPD) and the Texas Division of Emergency Management (TDEM) advocated for a taskforce to discuss preparedness and planning for people with disabilities and individuals with access and functional needs.

The Disability Task Force was originally convened in late 2011. This advisory group is tasked with providing input to Texas emergency management and promoting preparedness efforts for Texans with disabilities by representing state and local disability-related organizations, state agencies, and local governments.

The Task Force consists of a group of volunteers who donate their time to help ensure individuals with disabilities or functional and access needs are included across all phases of emergency preparedness, response and recovery. Task Force subcommittees are led by representatives from a variety of governmental and disability-related organizations from across the state of Texas.

The Task Force has developed and updated the Functional Needs Support Service (FNSS) Tool Kit for local governments, published the Texas Effective Communication Toolkit, and quarterly distributes the Texas Disability Integration Newsletter.

Effective Communications Toolkit

Will O'Neill

Disability Task Force Member

The Effective Communications Subcommittee recognized early in their development that there was a need to develop a tool kit that would assist with the development of a sound communications program during disaster. To meet the Americans with Disabilities Act requirements and to support the whole community including people with disabilities and others with access and functional needs, all emergency management materials must be developed in accessible formats and integrate the needs of people with disabilities. In addition, state agencies and local jurisdictions must support auxiliary aids and services to provide effective communication to persons with disabilities. The Effective Communications Toolkit is a document that provides a general baseline for Texas State Agencies and Texas local governments.

This toolkit applies to emergency management and public information professionals who work for or with local jurisdictions to communicate warnings, notifications, and other messages to news media and the public. The purpose of the toolkit is to help ensure that emergency communication services and equipment address the functional and access needs of people with disabilities as part of a "whole community" approach endorsed by federal, state and local emergency management partners.

The toolkit was developed with the input of Texas State Agencies, local jurisdictions and representatives from the disability community to identify inclusive and integrative techniques for communication. The toolkit provides guidance on how to support the development of accessible documents, videos and websites; emphasizes multi-media approaches to message dissemination and one-on-one communication considerations. The tools in the Communications toolkit, is a starting point for developing local effective communication techniques and processes. As with any planning and preparedness efforts, we encourage all users of this toolkit to approach their own community to ensure that the unique needs of their citizens'

communication needs are supported. The Effective Communications Toolkit can be found at:

<https://www.preparingtexas.org/preparedness.aspx?page=df9e78fc-3f14-4c6c-aad8-7a2b90c425ef>

Functional Needs Support Services (FNSS) Tool Kit

The Disability Task Force has developed a training package to assist newly elected public officials, Texas government employees, contractors, and the general public in understanding the whole community approach in emergency management. This tool kit is designed to provide first responders and emergency management professionals basic information about interacting with Texans with disabilities during a disaster and to identify disability leaders in the local communities.

This 15-minute overview will:

- Provide awareness of the necessary requirements for incorporating the whole community approach in emergency management,
- Review considerations for achieving a lawful and equitable program for the delivery of Functional Needs and Support Services (FNSS) for children and adults, and
- Provide additional informational resources regarding the integration of the whole community in emergency management.

The training package, which includes an Instructors Guide and a slide presentation, can be found at:

<https://www.preparingtexas.org/preparedness.aspx?page=32137bc8-eed7-42bb-ad7e-2765fd8abdb9>

Please feel free to download this training information and add it to your local or organization training plans.

Children with Disabilities Experiencing Disaster or Terrorism

Donghyun Kang, Center on Disability & Development at Texas A&M University

This research article consists of reviewed empirical studies reporting psychosocial factors relating to children with disabilities in the context of disaster or terrorism. A summary follows:

- **Disability-Related Factors which Influence Disaster Exposure**

(a) Cognitive capacity and developmental stage influence children's threat appraisal, attention, and concentration in disaster. Pre-event emotional status and prior trauma can also affect post-disaster reactions and recovery in children.

(b) Medical conditions, specialized diets, or adaptive equipment of children with disabilities can challenge evacuation and treatment procedures in emergency situations.

- **Reactions of Children with Disabilities to Disaster**

(a) Children with disabilities such as autism spectrum disorder and learning disability can evidence post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) following disasters or other crises.

(b) Children with disabilities may display less intrusive grieving behaviors and exhibit later onset of trauma-related behaviors.

(c) Children with disabilities can experience significant declines in adaptive behavior post-disaster.

- **Individual Psychological Treatment of Children with Disabilities**

(a) Clinicians may attribute disaster symptoms to the preexisting disability. Gathering a complete trauma history and descriptions of child conduct from caregivers can help clinicians distinguish between typical behavior and new trauma symptoms in children with disabilities.

(b) Cognitive-behavioral therapies (CBT) are a frontline treatment for child trauma.

(c) The use of medications with children exposed to disaster should be adjunctive to psychotherapeutic interventions and used only to relieve specific acute symptoms.

- **Reactions of Families of Children with Disabilities to Disaster**

(a) Parents are the most important source of emotional support for children after emergency experiences.

(b) Family-focused CBTs are typically more effective than child-focused CBTs in reducing PTSD symptoms.

- **School and Teacher Factors**

(a) Schools are ideal settings for providing emergency mental health services as teachers and other school personnel understand developmental issues critical to working with children.

(b) Special education teachers can provide effective emotional support to children with disabilities following disasters.

(c) Collaboration between mental health professionals and teachers can be instrumental in supporting children with disabilities.

- **Social and Community Factors**

(a) Children with disabilities have unique support needs which may affect physical well-being following disaster.

(b) Children who relocate to new communities after a disaster may face significant challenges in reconnecting to disability-related services and instructional supports.

From: Stough, L. M., Ducey, E. M., & Kang, D. (2017). Addressing the needs of children with disabilities experiencing disaster or terrorism. *Current Psychiatry Reports*, 19, 24.

Disability Task Force on Emergency Management Membership

Dr. Laura M. Stough, Chair

Center on Disability and Development, Texas
A&M University

Sandra Breitengross Bitter, Vice Chair

Texas State Independent Living Council

Gisela Ryan-Bunger, Texas Division of Emergency Management Staff Liaison

Texas Division of Emergency Management

Jason Oyer, Planning Sub-Committee Chair

Texas Division of Emergency Management

Current and Past Members of the Task Force

- American Red Cross
- City of McKinney, Office of Emergency Management Coordinator
- Coalition of Texans with Disabilities
- Department of Aging Disability Services
- FEMA Disability Integration Coordinator Region VI
- Harris County Office of Homeland Security & Emergency Management
- Mayor's Committee on People with Disabilities
- National Federation of the Blind of Texas
- North Central Texas Council of Governments
- Governors Committee on People with Disabilities
- Texas A&M University, Center on Disability and Development
- Texas Animal Health Commission
- Texas Association of Regional Councils
- Texas Association of the Deaf
- Texas Chapter for the American Foundation for the Blind
- Texas Chapter of the Hearing Loss Association of America
- Texas Council for Developmental Disabilities
- Texas Council of Community Centers
- Texas Council on Autism & Pervasive Developmental Disorders
- Texas Deaf Blind Multi-Handicapped Association
- Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS)

- Texas Division of Emergency Management (TDEM)
- Texas Health and Human Services Commission
- Texas Health Science Center at Houston
- Texas Independent Living Centers
- Texas Paralyzed Veterans of America
- Texas State Independent Living Council
- Texas Voluntary Organization Active in Disaster
- University of Texas, Center for Disability Studies